
REVELATIONS BY AN
EX-DIRECTOR OF
KRUPP'S

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*Dr. Mühlon's Memorandum
and his letter to
Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg*

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INTRODUCTION

FOR nearly four years the world has been waiting for the further information which we knew would eventually be forthcoming as to the details of the conspiracy by which the present war was engineered. Nobody who had read carefully the published diplomatic correspondence could have any doubt as to the essential truth, but the conclusive evidence was still wanting. What had happened during the month which intervened between the murder of the Archduke and the presentation of the Austrian Note to Serbia? On this, which is far more critical than the events of the twelve days themselves, the German Government have always preserved a stony silence.

At last the veil is being lifted. The revelations which are here printed come from a man who had every opportunity to know the truth. Herr Mühlön, who at first apparently had some connection with the German Foreign Office, subsequently became one of the directors of Krupp's, the great German armament firm at Essen, and was employed by them on important business in connection with Morocco shortly before the affair of Agadir.

He was evidently most interested in the commercial side of the business and was thereby brought into close communication with the Deutsche Bank, which has played so large a part in financing Ger-

man enterprise in all parts of the world. It was in the ordinary course of his business that he had the very important conversation with Herr Helfferich who was at that time one of the directors of the Deutsche Bank, and afterwards became Imperial Minister of Finance.

The revelation as to the perfidy of the German Government seems from the first to have made a profound impression on Herr Mühlon's mind. It would seem that soon afterwards he resigned his post as director of Krupp's, but continued to be employed by the Foreign Office in connection with Rumanian affairs at a time when Rumania was not yet a belligerent Power.

It was apparently in 1917 that he finally determined to give up all employment which would make him an accomplice of the German Government; he then left the country and took up his residence in Switzerland.

The documents here reproduced are destined to be among the prime authorities as to the responsibility for the war.

It is important to notice that no full contradiction or refutation of his statements has been forthcoming from the German side. All that the Imperial Vice-Chancellor, speaking for the Government, has been able to do is to inform us that Herr Mühlon is "neurasthenic," in the same way as they now tell us that Prince Lichnowsky is mentally affected. As a German paper itself has pointed out, what is of importance is not Herr Mühlon himself, but the statements that he has made.

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I

THE GERMAN GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE WAR

*A Memorandum by Dr. Mühlon **

IN the middle of July, 1914, as on many other occasions, I had a conversation with Dr. Helfferich, who was at that time the Director of the Deutsche Bank in Berlin and is now the official representative of the Imperial Chancellor. There were certain big transactions (in Bulgaria and Turkey) in which the firm of Krupp took an active interest for business reasons (supplying war materials), and the Deutsche Bank had adopted a negative attitude in the matter. In justification of the bank's attitude, Dr. Helfferich gave me several reasons, and concluded with the following:

"The political situation has become very threatening. In any case the Deutsche Bank must wait before committing itself further in foreign countries. The Austrians have been with the Kaiser during the last few days. In eight days' time Vienna will deliver a very sharply-worded Ultimatum

* First published in the *Berliner Tageblatt*, March 21, 1918.

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to Serbia. The Ultimatum, which will have a quite short time-limit, will contain demands of the following nature: Punishment of a number of officers, dissolution of political associations, criminal investigations in Serbia with the co-operation of officials of the Dual Monarchy. In fact, immediate satisfaction will be demanded on a number of definite issues, failing which Austria-Hungary will declare war on Serbia."

Dr. Helfferich added that the Kaiser had expressed his decided approval of this Austro-Hungarian move. The Kaiser had said that he regarded a conflict with Serbia as a domestic affair concerning Austria-Hungary and Serbia alone, and that he would not allow any other state to interfere; that if Russia mobilised, he would mobilise too; that mobilisation in his case meant immediate war; and that this time there should be no wavering. The Austrians, according to Dr. Helfferich, were delighted at the Kaiser's determined attitude.

Thereupon I remarked to Dr. Helfferich that, even before his disquieting communication, I had been very much afraid that a world-war was coming, and that my fears were now converted into absolute certainty. He replied that "things certainly looked like war, but that perhaps France and Russia would after all reconsider their attitude in the matter. The Serbs decidedly deserved a lasting lesson."

This was the first communication I received with regard to the Kaiser's conversations with our allies. I knew that Dr. Helfferich stood in particularly confidential relations to those highly-placed persons who were bound to be initiated in the matter, and that

his communication was therefore reliable. On returning from Berlin, I informed Herr Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach, of whose Board of Directors at Essen I was then a member. Dr. Helfferich, I may remark, had expressly authorised me to do so. (It was intended at that time to make him a member of the Council of Supervision of Krupp's firm.)

Von Bohlen seemed greatly surprised that Dr. Helfferich should possess such information, complained that "after all, these Government people can never keep their mouths quite shut," and then made a statement to the following effect:

"He had himself been with the Kaiser during the last few days. The Kaiser had spoken to him too about his conversation with the Austrians and its result, but had so emphasised the secrecy of the matter, that he [*von Bohlen*] would not have ventured to tell even his own Board of Directors. But, as I already knew about it, he could tell me that Helfferich's statements were correct. Indeed, Helfferich appeared to know more details than he (*Bohlen*) himself. The position was, in fact, very critical. The Kaiser had told him he would declare war at once if Russia mobilised. This time people would see that he would not change his mind. The Kaiser's emphatic and repeated asseveration that this time nobody would be able to reproach him with irresolution had produced an almost comic effect."

Vienna's Ultimatum to Serbia made its appearance on the very day which Helfferich had predicted to me. I was again in Berlin at the time, and said frankly to Helfferich that I found the Ultimatum, in form and in content, simply monstrous. Dr. Helfferich, however, expressed the opinion that

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this was only the effect produced by the German translation. He said he had seen the Ultimatum in French, and one could not regard it as at all overdone in its French version. On the same occasion Helfferich also told me that the Kaiser's Scandinavian cruise was only a blind; that he had not arranged it on the customary scale, but was keeping in constant communication [*with Germany*] and near enough to be reached at any moment. All one could do now was to wait and see what happened. One must hope that the Austrians—who of course did not expect the Ultimatum to be accepted—would act quickly, before the other Powers had time to interfere. The Deutsche Bank had already made its preparations, so that it was ready for all eventualities. Thus, *e.g.*, it was keeping all gold as it was paid in, and not returning it to circulation. That could be done without exciting any attention whatever, and considerable sums were thus accumulating day by day.

Very soon after the Viennese Ultimatum to Serbia the German Government issued an announcement to the effect that Austria-Hungary had acted on its own account without Germany's foreknowledge. If one endeavoured to reconcile this announcement with the events which I have described above, the only possible solution was that the Kaiser had already committed himself, without allowing his Government any hand in the matter; and that the German representatives had not attempted, in their conversations with the Austrians, to draft an agreed text of the Ultimatum.

For the contents of the Ultimatum, as I have shown above, were known with considerable ac-

curacy in Germany. Herr Krupp von Bohlen, with whom I discussed this German official announcement—which, in effect at any rate, was a lie—disapproved of it as much as I did, because Germany ought never to have given *carte blanche* on such a momentous issue to a state like Austria; and because it was the duty of the leading statesmen to demand, both of the Kaiser and of our allies, that the Austrian claims and their Ultimatum to Serbia should be discussed and settled in the minutest details, and that the exact programme of the subsequent procedure should be fixed at the same time.

"Our leading statesmen," he argued, "had no right, whatever view they might take of the matter, to surrender themselves to the Austrians without reserve, or to expose themselves to eventualities which they had not already taken into account. In pledging ourselves to the Austrians we ought to have attached appropriate conditions." In short, Herr von Bohlen considered that the German denial of foreknowledge, if there was any trace of truth in it, sinned against the elementary rules of the art of political diplomacy; and he led me to expect that he would speak in this sense to Herr von Jagow (at that time Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs), who was one of his particular friends.

After he had spoken to Herr von Jagow he gave me the following account of the interview: Herr von Jagow persisted in assuring him that he had taken no part in composing the text of the Austro-Hungarian Ultimatum, and that Germany had never even asked to collaborate. To Herr von Bohlen's objection that this was really inconceivable, Herr von Jagow had answered that of course he himself,

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as a diplomat, had thought of making a demand of the kind, but that, by the time he was informed of the matter and had been called in, the Kaiser was so deeply committed that it was already too late to take any steps consistent with diplomatic usage, and that there was nothing more to be done. The situation had been such that it was impossible any longer to propose any reservations and conditions. Moreover he, Jagow, had come to the conclusion that there would be one advantage in the omission, viz., that a good effect would be produced in Petrograd and Paris by the announcement, which Germany would be able to make, that we had not collaborated in the Viennese Ultimatum.

II

GERMANY'S GUILT

*Letter sent by Dr. Mühlon to Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg on May 7, 1917**

OUR EXCELLENCY,

HOWEVER numerous and crass the errors and faults committed by Germany since the war began, I have none the less long persisted in the belief that our leaders would eventually show themselves possessed of a belated foresight. It was in this hope that I put myself to a certain extent at our service to collaborate with you in Roumania, and that I informed you I was ready to help you in the country in which I am living at present (Switzerland), if our aim was to be the bringing together of the parties at war. That I was and still am opposed to any work other than that of reconciliation and restoration I proved, shortly after hostilities opened, by resigning once and for all from the directorate of Krupp's works.

But since the first days of 1917 I have abandoned all hope as regards the present leaders of Germany. Our offer of peace with no indication of our war aims, the unrestricted submarine war, the deportations from Belgium, the systematic destruction in France, the torpedoing of English hospital ships

* Translated from the French version given in *L'Humanité*, March 31, 1918.

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have so discredited the governors of the [German Empire, that I am profoundly convinced that they are for ever disqualified for the task of elaborating and concluding a just and sincere international agreement. They may change their personal views, but they cannot remain the representatives of the German cause.

The German people will only be able to atone for the grievous sins committed against its own present and future, against that of Europe and all mankind, when it is represented by other men with a different type of mind. To tell the truth, it is only just that its reputation throughout the entire world should be as bad as it is. The triumph of its methods—the military and political methods by which it has conducted the war up till now—would mean the defeat of the highest ideas and hopes of humanity. We have only to picture to ourselves a nation exhausted, demoralised, or sick of violence consenting to make peace with a Government which has waged such a war in order to realise how gloomy and uncertain in that case would remain the path and prospects of mankind.

As a man and as a German, who desires nothing but the welfare of the sorely tried and deceived German people, I turn my back for good and all on the present representatives of the German Government. And my one desire is that all independent men should do the same and that many Germans may understand and act. Since any appeal to German public opinion is impossible for me at present, I have considered it to be my strict duty to inform your Excellency of my point of view.

W. MÜHLON.

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